

INTRODUCTORY AND HISTORICAL 25

eighty people, including men, women and children, would⁵²⁷ be present. They would spend the day feasting and drinking,⁷⁹⁶ and on some occasions would continue the party well into the following day. There would generally be some visitors^[574] from nearby villages and, in consequence, much exchange of gossip. These fortnightly meetings served the purpose of a newspaper and helped to keep the people in touch. They^[203] were almost the only break in a life of otherwise unceasing toil.

There are no shops in Lingtem, no doctor, and no school.⁴³⁸ The people are mainly self-supporting and grow all their own food. Such things as cotton, oil and salt are obtained from Mangen which, in addition to a few Marwari shop-^[205]keepers, has also a post office to which mails are delivered twice a week. This, however, is not much used, since the^[212] Lepchas are for the most part still illiterate. This means that in order not to forget a thing they do not find it necessary to commit it to writing. As a result, they have, like most^[153] primitive peoples, quite remarkable memories.

For the first few days we were left completely alone; not⁶⁰⁹ a soul ventured near us. Early each morning Dhawa and I would set off in our quest for people, but everywhere we went there was nothing but empty houses, each with its^[231] guardian dog. I began to get worried, for it certainly looked as though the Maharaja was right, although actually (but I only learned this later) the people were merely away working in their fields. And then one morning Geoffrey discovered an ancient alone in a house. He was toothless,¹²³ decrepit, and ill, but willing to risk a visit. We decoyed him up to the monastery, gave him some medicine and plied him with cigarettes. As an informant he was useless; but his visit served to break the ice. Others followed, and the village soon realised that we really were harmless. Thereafter we were able to arrange for a regular stream of informants and someone or other usually came each morning to talk. In this manner we soon came to know most of the village by sight, and after the first few weeks were able to

291 dress is with sleeves) held with a girdle, and a jacket over it.
 [177] The head gear consists of a cloth worn in the manner of the Nepalese women. The old head-dress for the men was a thimble-shaped hat woven from bamboo; see book-cover. (Fig. 33-36).

301 The Rong folk wear rings, bracelets, and necklaces as ornaments. But one will never come across a case of a Rong wearing any ornamentation to the nose, the feet and the toes.

412 The most common implement used by the women is the sickle. A bent sickle hook-shaped at the upper end is called batur in the Lepcha tongue, and kurpa in Nepalese. It is used for cutting wood and the branches of trees. Another kind of sickle, in the shape of a half moon, is called angsu (sikal in Nepalese) and is used to mow grass and weeds. The third type has a toothed edge, and is used as a kind of saw. It is called angsu in Lepcha and ancher in Nepalese. A girl is given her sickle [668] at the age of seven or eight, and the boy his knife, so that from a very early age they may be able to practise the use of the most universal of instruments. Usually it is carried [482] in the belt at the back. (Fig. 37-44)

241 The most important of the implements used for farming
 412 is the wide shovel-like hoe, and it is used for loosening the earth and clearing it of weeds. There are in addition two or three pronged hoes used for loosening the earth and relieving it of weeds.

[177] The plough has been taken over from the Nepalese. It consists of a horn shaped piece of wood, which is tipped by the iron ploughshare. The drawing beam goes up from the centre and above is the plough handle with a handle to steer with. The beam is fixed to the yoke which is drawn by two oxen.

205 The economy of the Rong corresponds entirely with that
 174 of the other mountain peoples of South-East Asia and South China, e.g. the Miau. They were originally hunters who have taken over to farming. They have certainly not learnt the old agricultural economy from other peoples, but they absorbed into themselves the people who practised the arts of farming. Domestic animals are reared mainly for the purpose of sacrifice and not for any economic gain, and they are of the greatest importance. The combination of hunting with

farming must already have been effected by the Rong in very early times. 205 ● 174

Gorer believes that the Rong were hunters about three hundred years ago, and that they carried on a little farming with dry rice and millet and kept a few cattle. When the Bhutanese and the Nepalese overran the land, the Lepchas withdrew into the forests, where they gave up farming and lived solely by hunting. When peace was restored they again took up to farming.¹⁰⁰

(1) THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL CLASSIFICATION OF THE RONG

There are two basic types among the Lepchas which have to be clearly differentiated. The one with the long small face, the high forehead, the high narrow nose, and the well-defined eye-brow prominences; the eye is mostly without the Mongolian fold (if the upper lid droops it does not cover the inner corner of the eye). The face is also well-modelled; the cheek bones are not very prominent. The form of the head is mesocephalic or dolichocephalic. These people are taller and somewhat above the average height. The colour of the skin is light yellow. (Fig. 45). 142 141

The other type has a wide short face, a wide low forehead, well-defined supra-orbital ridges, a broad nose with depressed root and cheek bones that are somewhat more prominent. The eye often shows the Mongolian fold. The lips are thin, the shape of the head is brachycephalic, and the colour of the skin light yellow. Both the types have a slight growth of beard and a scanty growth of hair all over the body. The Mongolian spot occurs among most of the children of both types. The Lepchas call the spot "ri-om" and say that children without the spot are delicate. (Fig. 46)

The Rong have well-proportioned bodies. The muscles of the thigh and calves are particularly well-formed because of the fact that they are tireless mountain climbers. On the average however, the Rong are more lightly built than the neighbouring people. The women have very finely cut features.